

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7218

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 10546

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: ELECTIONS IN 1977??

1. IN RECENT WEEKS, ALL THREE CONGENS HAVE BEEN REPORTING CONVERSATIONS WITH LOCAL SOURCES (IN SOME CASES, AS GOV OF KARNATAKA U.S. DIKSHIT WITH CONGEN MCCASKILL, QUITE SENIOR POLITICIANS) SUGGESTING THAT IT LOOKS INCREASINGLY LIKELY THAT THERE MAY BE NATIONAL, BUT PROBABLY NOT STATE, ELECTIONS IN EARLY 1977. WE HAVE HEARD THESE SAME STORIES IN DELHI, INCLUDING FROM A GENERAL SECY OF THE YOUTH CONGRESS WHO TELLS US THIS IS WHAT SANJAY IS CURRENTLY THINKING ABOUT AND PREPARING FOR AS WELL SO AR AS YOUTH CONGRESS ORGANIZATION BUILDING IS CONCERNED. THE YOUTH CONGRESS IS CONVENING A GIANT GATHERING OF 8,000 BLOCK-LEVEL YC LEADERS FROM ALL OVER INDIA ON AUGUST 9-10 IN DELHI TO HEAR THE PM AND SANJAY TALK ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL AND POLICY GOALS AND TO BUILD PRIVATELY TOWARD GREATER POLITICAL EFFECTIVENESS. WE ARE TOLD THE YC MEMBERSHIP DRIVE OF FIVE MILLION IS OVER AHLF FULFILLED AND THE YC IS BEGINNING THE PROCESS OF SIFTING THROUGH MEMBERS FOR QUALITY AND POTENTIAL CANDIDATES.

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BUSINESSMEN WE HAVE SPOKEN WITH, WHO HAVE IN RECENT

WEEKS GIVEN LARGE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PARTY THROUGH ITS TREASURER P.C. SETHI, HAVE BEEN CAUTIONED THAT THEY MAY HAVE TO FORK UP MORE IF ELECTIONS ARE HELD EARLY NEXT YEAR.

2. WE HEAR THAT THE RUMORED MOVEMENT OF PARTY PRESIDENT BAROOAH INTO THE CABINET IN THE NEAR FUTURE WOULD BE FOLLOWED THEN IN A COUPLE OF MONTHS BY BAROOAH'S REPLACEMENT WITH SWARAN SINGH AS PARTY PRESIDENT. SWARAN SINGH (LESS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PARTY'S "LEFT WING") WOULD THEN PREPARE FOR 1977 ELECTIONS, MEND LEFT/RIGHT FACTIONAL PROBLEMS WITHIN LOCAL CONGRESS ORGANIZATIONS, AND IMPROVE THE ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF THE PARTY (AT WHICH BAROOAH HAS DONE RELATIVELY POORLY AND WHICH LONG-TIME MINISTER SWARAN SINGH IS TO HANDLE MUCH BETTER).

3. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE PM HAS MADE NO DECISIONS AS YET ON ELECTIONS AND THAT THE INCREASING RUMORS REFLECT ONLY FEELERS ON HER PART AND A WISH TO HAVE THE GROUND PREPARED SHOULD SHE WANT TO MAKE A DECISION. THERE WILL BE LOCAL ELECTIONS IN MOST RAJESTHAN TOWNS (OTHER THAN THOSE WHICH TRADITIONALLY RETURNED JANA SANGH MAJORITIES IN MID-AUGUST AND THE RESULTS OF THESE MAY BE AN INDICATION OF HOW THE VOLATILE URBAN VOTE WOULD GO. IT IS ALMOST CERTAINLY TOO EARLY, HOWEVER, FOR SUCH KEY CONSIDERATIONS AS THE PROGRESS OF THE MONSOON, PRICE STABILITY, AND THE GENERAL POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT TO BE ASSESSED SUFFICIENTLY CLEARLY FOR THE PM TO WANT TO MAKE A DECISION UNTIL THE FALL. BUT IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT SOME CONTINGENCY PLANNING IS BEING DONE.

4. JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN'S INFLUENCE IN TRYING TO WELD THE OPPOSITION PARTIES INTO A SINGLE GROUP HAS THUS FAR BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL, AND THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE HIS POLITICAL ADVICE WOULD BE HEEDED MORE DILIGENTLY IN THE FUTURE. NEVERTHELESS, HIS STATEMENT (ON LEAVING BOMBAY) JULY 14 THAT HE WOULD ADVISE THE OPPOSITION TO BOYCOTT ELECTIONS UNLESS

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THE EMERGENCY WAS LIFTED AND CIVIL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, ARE RESTORED IS THE FIRST OPEN HREAT WE HAVE SEEN THAT SUCH A STRATEGY MIGHT BE RESORTED TO BY THE OPPOSITION PARTIES, EVEN IF MRS GANDHI DECIDED TO CALL AN ELECTION. REGARDLESS OF THE VOTES OPPOSITION PARTIES MIGHT ACTUALLY GET IN AN ELECTION, MRS GANDHI MUST TAKE SERIOUSLY THE IMPACT ON HER INTER-

NATIONAL AND DOMESTIC IMAGE OF ELECTIONS FROM WHICH
SUBSTANTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE OPPOSITION INSIST ON
REMAINING FORMALLY ALOOF.
SAXBE

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